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RUST

Power Trip!

The big WR450F,
finally tamed?

SWM RS650R

The adv-lite we've been waiting for?

RUST do the Welsh

Part 2 – Warren builds the ultimate TE300

Knighter speaks

David Knight discusses a year of ups and downs...

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TEAR & SHARE

BY JON BENTMAN,
PHOTO: D AGRATI & FUTURE7MEDIA

A MORE EQUITABLE end to the enduro world championship (*'EnduroGP'*) it's hard to imagine. At Cahors in France, this weekend just gone, everyone – it seemed – came away with something. Which is no bad thing.

Hats off to Matt Phillips for taking the outright crown (*and E2*). Three seasons ago he was Junior world champ (*in his first season on the world stage*), but he always had the pace to match the very top riders and he proved this the very next season with his first '*senior*' title in E3. That this year he's made it to the top of the tree with Sherco, and with Fabrizio Azzalin (*of CH Racing – who introduced Phillips to world enduro in the first place*) is a beautiful thing. Nicely international, too – the Aussie racer, French manufacturer and Italian team boss – in these days when right-wing nationalism seems to be rearing its ugly head everywhere we should recognize we are all in this world together. It's also cool that Phillips won on the '*little*' 300SEF-R, that's a bike we really rate, an awesome racer, it's good to see its brilliance now proven at the highest level.



PHILLIPS

Great to see Beta and TM come away with additions to their '*palmares*', too (*in E3 and E1 respectively*). KTM and Husky (*Austrian Industries Inc.*) are on the face of things left empty-handed – quite an embarrassment in a year when they are showcasing their breakthrough 2017 models. Okay, they have the Women's and Youth titles, thanks to Laia Sanz and Jack Edmondson – but (*no disrespect*) those are not quite trump cards when it comes to sealing sales. However, both KTM and Husky finished the season with some fair glory in Cahors. Matthias Bellino won the first day outright on his Husky FE450 and Taylor Robert took day two on his KTM 450EXC-F, while Nathan Watson ripped up the E1 class on both days. Robert and Watson were rookies this season (*Watson was not known to have even ridden an enduro prior to this year*) and clearly they have the capability now to reach for world titles in 2017. So no premiere-league titles this year, but looking good for the future.

Even Yamaha and Honda have found something to shout about. Honda can thank Giacomo Redondi for the Junior title (*not quite as important as Tim Gajser's MXGP crown*), and while Yamaha have no titles they've demonstrated their bikes have the capability; Jamie McCanney grabbing a podium finish on his return from injury, while Loic Larrieu posted a super-impressive second outright on day two on the WR450F (*a bike we've returned to this issue, to show actually it's more than a rally bike*).

It would be neat if we, the buying public, would react to these results. Beta's RR300 is an excellent machine, one that we see as a great extreme machine, but Steve Holcombe has shown to be an outright racer too. Sherco's have looked cool for years, and ride so neatly, now they have the ultimate accolade to underline their capability. TMs rock – that beautiful alloy beam frame, that low-volume hand-built bespoke bike caché. It would be cool if the enduro paddocks of the world could become as multi-coloured as the world championship scene.

WATSON



PHILLIPS & HOLCOMBE

Meanwhile we're working hard to make RUST as multi-coloured, multi-cultural as EnduroGP. You'll find a mix of enduro and adventure content again this issue. We're happy to have an update from our (*not-quite*) regular columnist David Knight on his year and his future plans. We're happy to find Yamaha's latest WR450F has far more potential than the European launch suggested. We're also super-pleased that SWM has a third great machine in their RS650R, which is a lovely bit of mid-sized adventure kit. We asked adventure mate July Behl if the flood of social media content is devaluing the big adventure ride. And we wish we hadn't asked our publisher Warren Malschinger to write-up his prep for the Welsh Two Day Enduro – we were looking for a nickname for him, now we have 'War-ren Peace'!

We hope you enjoy the read. We're always keen to hear your feedback too – contact us at editorial@rustsports.com or on our Rust Sports Facebook page if there's anything you'd like to say...



WaterR Craft

A Welsh summer is a fickle thing. And in August 2016, while the East of England was tinder dry, Wales was, as ever, waterlogged. Of course that doesn't stop us enjoying riding there, especially on the enduros – heck, '*weather*' makes enduro riding. So here's Yamaha Off Road Experience's Dylan Jones showing yet another side of the WR450F's character. On this his first pass the water was so deep it just about stopped him dead, but not before he made the most impressive spalsh. Go DJ!

Photo credit: JB



A GENTLE SWIM

While in Gallery 1 DJ hit his puddle full-noise, enduro style, here Mark Molyneux of the Sweet Lamb Adventure Bike Academy is hitting his Welsh water hazard in proper adventure style – that is to say with the appropriate level of caution. And rightly so, mid-puddle the SWM picked up a bow wave that washed clean over the handle-bars. Besides, adventure is about the nature as much as the ride, and on this day in Powys, the sun was making the greens and browns of the Welsh moorland come alive. It would have been rude to have rushed it.

Photo credit: JB



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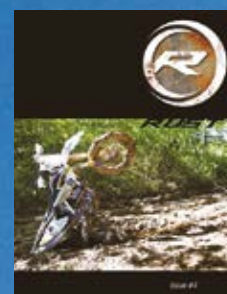
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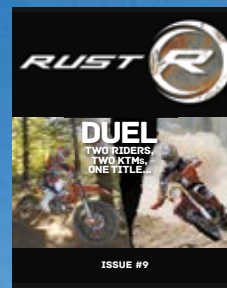
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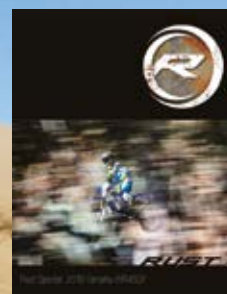
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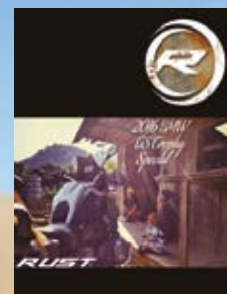
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2016 Yamaha WR450F revisited



Taming the Wild Ride

The 2016 Yamaha WR450F deserves a re-visit. The European launch highlighted its big power, big trails capability – but we never found out whether it can cope with the woods. So now we've hacked our way into Wales to see if the latest big WR really can do technical

Words & images: JB



Enduro

SOMETIMES WE CAN be a bit harsh. Not intentionally, circumstances can provoke it. At the European launch of the latest Yamaha WR450F (late last year – see our *RUST Yamaha WR450F Special*) we rode a long and speedy day across southern Spain on the new WR. And while we were impressed with its power, speed and especially its stability and security when tanking-on over vast terrain, we were struggling to figure whether it could do woods riding. Great rally bike, we said...

Tweaks with the Yamaha Power Tuner make the big Yamaha a much better proposition...



Taming
the
Wild
Ride





Taming the Wild Ride

Perhaps it didn't help that Yamaha Europe were flat-out calling the WR *'not for the inexperienced'* and were heavily pushing the Dakar Rally connections. It didn't help either that the front pushed a bit when we briefly got into some tighter stuff, and an imperfect pick-up off the bottom of the rev kind of compounded the situation. It felt super-tall as well. Not an easy ride in the technical stuff.

None of which was music to the ears of Dylan Jones at the Yamaha Off Road Experience (YORE) in Wales. They run an enduro school based on Yamaha's WR-Fs and needed the WR450F to be a woods-friendly weapon given the forests and hills they teach in and over. Not to be defeated too soon, Dylan did some digging.

"We've got great relations with Yamaha Australia, share a lot of data, so after I saw the results from the European launch I called them to see how their launch had gone. It was quite different to the European one, they rode in forest and had made a few changes to the bikes beforehand. They'd worked with the Yamaha Power Tuner and gave their journalists a softer mapping – richer on the fuelling and with retarded ignition – to make the WR an easier ride. The Aussie journos lapped it up."

"You have to bear in mind the bike is closely related to the YZ450F motocrosser and has this incredible expert-level capability straight from the crate. Power and high-speed handling are not an issue. The first line of development is then to soften it off, to make it easier for the average rider."





WHO ARE YOU?

Dylan makes a fair point. Increasingly much of our riding is non-competitive. Just as in amateur motocross, we're seeing more and more riders side-stepping competition and enjoying 'practice days' without the pressures of checks or special tests. Ride when you want, stop when you want. Chill with your buddies. You can't knock that!

"We're not all chasing championships, most are simply looking to enjoy a good day out, having fun with their mates, while enjoying a responsive bike. So the WR's high-end capability isn't the amateur rider's first priority. The good news is that through the plug-in Yamaha Power Tuner there is so much adjustability in the WR's engine characteristics."

"Likewise the suspension is very high quality, but on stock settings seems set-up for the expert rider. In stock form the WR is fast with a firm ride. So essentially we were looking to back everything off."



Taming
the
Wild
Ride



LOWER, SOFTER

Dylan also noted, as we had, that the WR stands tall, probably too high for woods work, where getting your foot down from time to time can be pretty useful, in getting through a bog or over a root.

As it stands the WR also sits a bit tail-high, the shock is apparently a bit longer than even the YZ-F unit. This not only makes the seat height a little too lofty but adds to the quick steering, maybe too much. At the European launch we'd mentioned that cornering was better effected from a mid-saddle position rather than front of saddle, as this seemed to overload the front end.

"We found that too, Yamaha obviously wanted an agile bike, but the WR turns almost too well. So we looked to rebalance the bike, and have been running between 105 and 110mm of rider sag to bring the back down. At the same time we've been able to drop the forks through the clamps, probably about 5-10mm. The bike remains level and balanced front-to-rear at that, but it brings the seat height down to a more manageable level. It's by no means lowered, it's still a tall bike, but the rider feels more in control and the WR feels less physically intimidating."

Dylan and the YORE team also tested (...and tested and tested – they've been six



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the
Wild
Ride





Taming the Wild Ride

months on the bikes non-stop) their damping settings, and found both on front and rear that less compression damping made the biggest difference. They've stuck with the stock springs rates, although in some countries, such as Australia and the US, there's been a trend to fitting firmer fork springs, but in the woods of Wales, those 4.5N/mm springs work just fine (see the panel for the Yamaha Off Road Experience final settings).

MIND THE GAP

As for the engine mapping, well, one issue that needed addressing was the curious absence of bottom end. It's not exactly lacking, but the stock fuelling seems to leave a glitch right off the bottom and, given it doesn't pull too strongly from the bottom, when you reach the strong mid, that then comes in with a hit. So YORE sought to fill that bottom end void. This meant richening up the fuelling, while retarding the ignition, mostly through the part throttle settings. This, says Dylan, really smoothed out the first half of the rev, making for a strong but controllable bottom end with a smoother transition to the mid-range, while the top end of course is just fine!

SCHOOL OF ROCK

Dylan was delighted with the tuning, it's substantially changed the nature of the WR. The bike is still a full-fat 450 and will still call for a strong rider to be ridden fast all day, but



Taming the Wild Ride

the new settings at least make the WR as accessible as every other 450.

"The WR always had great potential. The chassis is fantastic, the motor is so strong, and it is a great package. Only where bikes such as KTM 450EXCs have come with clubman-level set-ups as standard, it seems Yamaha have come from the other end of the scale, making it an experts' bike as standard."

"However, the tune-ability in the Kayaba suspension, and the engine mapping through the Power Tuner mean the bike can be brought back to clubman-friendly settings. The bike has amazing handling, that chassis is pure class, and the motor is excellent – and now anyone can ride and appreciate that. So when our clients come to the enduro schools they're typically really impressed when they ride the WR450F."



A FEW DETAILS

Now while we're here, here's a few more basic WR-set-up details from YORE. YORE swap the standard bars and levers for Renthal's unbraced Fat Bar type and folding Intelli-levers. The bikes are set-up both with the handlebars in the forward mount and in the rear mount – it's simple, taller riders prefer the forward, shorter the rear. There's no right and wrong.

YORE prefer to use Dunlop Geomax MX52 tyres (*not FIM enduro tyres*) which offer excellent grip in the local conditions (*rock, roots and loam*) and last well. They use tubes, not mousses, set at 15psi – just enough to prevent too many pinch-flats, low enough to give decent grip.

"When we race we use mousses, but mousses aren't practical for school use. Proper mousse care should involve removal after each ride, with storage in a cool place and proper lubing before re-use. Most people don't do that, they just fit them and leave them until their tyre is shot, it's only then the mousse will see some care. But left like that you drastically reduce the service life of the mousse. It's an often overlooked aspect of bike maintenance."

By the way, on suspension, YORE don't get fancy with strip-downs of the forks every 20 hours. Instead diligent cleaning and



Taming the Wild Ride

especially cleaning out of the dust seals and re-lubing after each ride help to keep the forks working well for longer without seal failures.

As well, YORE fit the French-made AXP Racing sump-engine guards. These give better protection than the stock guard, covering the water pump, but also crucially covering the gap between the front two rails of the frame cradle, so stopping mud entering and packing the gap between the engine and the guard.



THE RIDE

Of course we had to find out for ourselves – had YORE's settings worked? Of course they had. Immediately you're struck by the fact the WR doesn't sit skyscraper tall anymore, it's at a proper height. Also, with this bike having well over 100 hours on it, you could feel how the Kayaba suspension had become more plush with use and on the new settings it feels to sit a little lower in the stroke, again lowering the bike – handy when threading through the trees. You could still hit bumps and whoops with so much confidence, the frame and suspension simply absorb everything, but the subtlety was there to deal with the small stuff.

The motor is much improved, too. It feels docile; it picks up cleanly right from the bottom and, if anything, feels underpowered. It's not, it's just so much more controllable. We had a 2015 WR250F along for the ride and when we swapped to that you feel what a quantum downgrade on power that is. No, the WR450F still has its stomp, it's simply more user-friendly. Mind you, that air-box at the front of the 'tank' still makes a fair induction roar, much louder than conventional, er, non-reverso, under-seat set-ups. It's simply something you get used to, said Dylan.

By the end of the day – a seriously wet day as you can see – we agreed with Dylan, the

Taming the Wild Ride



Enduro

new WR450F does make a credible woods weapon. It's an enduro bike as well as a rally machine – and yes, we can see it going toe-to-toe with the KTMs and Huskies of this world. It'll even make a decent trail bike, it's that manageable. Not 250F manageable – we had the WR250F along to confirm that (*what a bike!*) – but still up to the class standard. Yeah, big bad blue can do 'easy'...

Yamaha Off Road Experience

2016 Yamaha WR450F

SUSPENSION SETTINGS

FORKS

Springs: 4.5N/mm (stock)

Compression: 16 clicks out

Rebound: 11 clicks out

SHOCK

Spring: 56N/mm (stock)

Rider sag: 105-110mm

Hi-speed compression: 11 clicks out

Lo-speed compression: 1 turn out

Rebound: 8 clicks out

ENGINE MAP SETTINGS

Per Yamaha Power Tuner

Fuel injection

0	+1	+1
+2	+2	+1
+3	+2	0

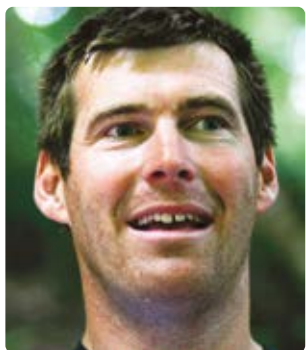
Ignition

-2	-1	0
-3	-2	-1
-4	-3	-1



Taming
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Ride





ENDURO, ENDURANCE, SLICKS & SMOOTH

BY DAVID KNIGHT,
PHOTOS: JB & VARIOUS

David Knight MBE is back – as our columnist. He never actually went away, just wasn't given to writing so much, and proving impervious to reminders! So in case you missed it, this was the past eight months, from Knighter's viewpoint

WELL FOLKS IT'S been a while but I'm happy to be writing a column in RUST magazine again, and there has been a lot going on over the past six months. JB calls me every so often asking for a column and I say, how soon? He says, how about next week? Then I say, okay. But it doesn't happen. Life gets in the way of writing. And when you're not a writer, yeah you don't exactly rush to it, do you? But I've been pinned down well and good this time, so where to begin...?

Well, I can go right back to the start of 2016 – which seems like yesterday, but is already eight whole months ago. At the beginning of this year I didn't really have a decent deal sorted, and so I rode the first two rounds of the ACU British Extreme Championship and the Tough One on my own KTM 300EXC, which all went well really – apart from riding the proper track at the Tough One, which not everyone was!



DEAL, NO DEAL

On the bike deal front, firstly what happened, a guy at KTM UK was doing the budgets (*after former boss Shaun Sisterson had gone*) but unfortunately the new guy didn't seem to understand what enduro was and what is needed to compete at a British and International level – and to be able to win – and I simply couldn't afford to race on what they had to offer, never mind try and win. This was unfortunate as most of my success has been with KTM and coming off the back of a good end to 2015 I was looking forward to a strong start in 2016.

Then, after being let down by another manufacturer that had promised a lot and led me to the end of the road then backed out as the budget apparently went on something else, I was pretty much left without a ride.

However, with nothing on the table in terms of enduro, I agreed a deal with

Jackson Racing and Honda UK to fulfill an ambition to go endurance road racing – something I have always wanted to try. What I didn't expect was to be dropped straight into the FIM world championship endurance series, but me being me, and loving a challenge, I jumped at the chance. So off to Spain I went to the weeklong test in Montebianco to get accustomed to the Superstock-spec Honda Fireblade and the rest of the team.

I know most of the boys and my teammates were a certain John McGuinness, Conor Cummings and Steve Mercer. I'd be the reserve rider in the team so I do everything on the race weekend apart from do the race unless obviously one of the guys gets hurt or ill, so a perfect opportunity for me to learn with the best guys. Why world endurance? I've always had a passion of road racing, always liked long races, and it's a little safer than pure road racing (*like the TT*) so it's a no brainer really.

Spain was great, good weather, loads of laps, a great bunch of lads that all helped me a lot and were great to me, and most importantly for me I had loads of fun and improved a lot. The team was happy with my progress and it was nice to feel appreciated again by a team. During the test there was a bit of talk about Dakar and enduro, I sat down with Honda UK and Honda Europe, and I agreed to do the rest of the year racing for them in the UK and they would in turn push the Dakar for me with HRC. The Dakar is the thing I really want a good go at, the last thing on my list I really want to do.

Anyway back to the endurance thing, and one thing I noticed is that it's much easier in some respects to do an hour flat out on a superbike than on a dirt bike as your lungs don't explode. But at the same time it's really physical on your arms and legs as superbikes



“ With nothing on the table in terms of enduro, I agreed a deal with Jackson Racing and Honda UK to fulfill an ambition to go endurance road racing... ”

are a heavy bike to throw about and the forces on your arms when braking are unreal. It's so different to what I'm used to, but I think that's the appeal, learning something from scratch.

RACING A CHOOK CHASER...

After the tests I got home and started getting my stuff together for when my Honda CRF450s arrived, so I could get cracking on building them into a competitive enduro bike – which is never easy when starting with a motocross bike. The good thing was the bikes are not much different to my 2013 CRF450, just mods to the cylinder head basically, so for the chassis I already had a good setting.

The bikes arrived pretty late so I borrowed my brother-in-law's CRF250X for the final round of the ACU British Extreme Championship. To finish the race was all that was needed, which is sometimes harder than having to win it, especially when you borrow a farmer's bike that's covered in shite with 160 hours on without seeing a spanner! Anyway I spent a week on it getting it prepped; I went to put a piston in but it was the wrong one, so I figured at least it'd not seize. So off I went to the Extreme Ravines.

I had no one helping me, the same as the first few races of the year – just myself, a bike and the van. I had put a bigger tank on the bike (*off an older model which my brother had in his workshop, fixing for a customer, who kindly lent it to me*) as I thought a big tank would do the whole race – helpful as I didn't have a pit crew. I'm glad to say I won the race by six minutes and so won the ACU British title on the farm bike! Good mate Graham Jarvis was second on a factory Husky, Billy Bolt was a further five minutes behind in third on a very good 'Smooth'-built (*Smooth being Julian Stephen*) KTM.

It was pretty satisfying winning on an old 2009-model trail bike, with 160 hours on it, against Jarvis! We all know he is the world's best extreme rider – but

perhaps that's because I'm not there?! To be fair, Graham and Jonny (Walker) are great riders but I honestly believe I am the only person that can beat them, (*Wade Young can get close on a good day*). That said, to really beat them I'd need to train more for hard enduro as I still only do special test training. And like I've said before, we are all totally different and different races will suit us sometimes better or sometimes worse, but I think the races would be much more exciting with three big names rather than two and on different makes of bike! Maybe it will happen, maybe not?

LE MANS (NON) START

Next up I got a call up to do the Le Mans 24hour endurance race as reserve rider. It was a great experience, I learnt a lot again, got faster and made decent lap times especially in the wet. Riding a race bike at night was new and daunting, and I did ask myself what the hell am I doing? It was two o'clock in the morning, at the time, so it was slippery and many riders had big crashes but I got stuck in and what a great experience. Thankfully our guys all made it to the start in one piece, which I was happy about, but I was also disappointed in a way not to be racing. But I think at this stage doing practice, qualifying and warm-up was just right for me, true I'd learn loads more in a race but I don't want to push it too much.

Since Le Mans I've had some good races but some bad ones too but I did get selected for the British ISDE Trophy team in Spain. The reason for the not so good races has been lack of movement and lots of pain in my bloody old right hip. I had surgery on both hips five years ago which worked a treat on my left one but the right one has never been great and it was actually at Le Mans I felt it the most and was in a lot of pain. I caught it in a British Sprint Enduro a couple of weeks later and from then on I've



“ In the last week, due to my hip problems, I've had to withdraw from the 2016 ISDE in Spain... I'm pretty devastated but I wish the team the best of luck... ”

struggled with it on and off the bike. I've had injections to try and settle the pain and scans and X-rays which showed I've broken a piece off as it's gone further than it mechanically can.

Since then I've ridden my 'home' (*ie Manx*) British Enduro Championship round – the first time it's been to the Isle of Man – and although I rode through a lot of pain for a win in E2 and third overall on Day 1, I was awake all night in severe pain and only rode half a lap on Sunday before having to call it quits. I was gutted to say the least, but that outcome was always in the back of my mind as a probability.

18 AGAIN?

I've had more scans and advice since and I'll be getting surgery to fix the problem in the next few weeks, which is hard to take but it's the only option and the surgeon says it'll make me feel 18 again and assures me that'll I'll get back to my best. So I'm going to get my body fixed and train like never before and get sorted for 2017 and see what's in store for me. I know if the operation and rehab goes well and my body allows, I can still win at any race at any level, I'm sure of that – I was winning tests outright in last year's ISDE, and that was riding with the effects of a virus and in lots of pain with my hip so I know if I'm actually 100% I'll be thereabouts.

Coming right up to date now, one thing I've had to do this last week is withdraw from the 2016 ISDE in Spain. I'm pretty devastated as I think we have a good chance to win it but it's not fair on the other lads or the team for me to be selfish and go, knowing that I'm far from 100% and in lots of pain. With all four riders to count, I can't afford to risk letting the team down so I wish the team and my replacement, Jamie Lewis, all the best for the event. I'm happier knowing I'll be fixed and on my way to recovering and being 110% fit for whatever 2017 brings me.

So, there we have it, that's probably four columns in one – JB's sure to appreciate that! Until next time – have fun out there. Enjoy your riding.



Long Termers

Last issue we looked at the prep on the Yamaha WR250F. This issue, Warren's Husqvarna TE300 and KTM 200EXC get the once over. Arguably they needed less prep, not more. But Warren does nothing by halves...

Words: Warren Malschinger
Images: JB & WM



WELSH TWO DAZE

PART 2

THE CALM BEFORE
THE STORM...





Long Termers

IT'S BEEN MY experience that a fast rider on a stock machine is faster than an average rider on a tricked out machine. That doesn't stop all of us wanting to add some 'bling' to our prized possessions. It's also not to say that improvements to a stock bike cannot make a difference to Mr Joe Average as well as an expert rider. They can.

Here at RUST we have the enviable position of being able to build bikes that if we were to build them personally would be out of our reach financially and most of us would bite our arm off to own. Our goal as a publication however is to inform, to provide options and perhaps some insight into where best to spend your money when you're next considering an upgrade. So while the total package weighed pretty heavily on the RUST budget and had our bean counters in a scowl, the majority of the upgrades when looked at individually are affordable and within the reach of us mere mortals.

Before we begin I have to admit that I built this bike for me, so it may not be everyone's cup of tea, my aim was also to introduce some upgrades into the mix that in my opinion often get overlooked, and when you read the race reviews you'll see why.

And in my opinion, if you're going to do anything, then you may as well do it right!

Also, I'm not one for last minute; don't get me wrong I love spontaneity but I'm just way too competitive to accept bad prep. That said the one massively frustrating (*and the most important*) part of the prep that I couldn't control was getting enough bike time. Living in Guernsey in the Channel Islands on a meagre 25 square miles means that there is nowhere to ride off-road. They have a pretty good motocross track but this is limited to use 12 times year or less, so if you want to ride enduro, it involves a ferry, or a plane and a drive, along with a pocket full of cash – arghh. So while my prep was pretty good on all other fronts this was the one area that was just beyond my control.

WELSH TWO DAZE



THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM



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Freestyle

www.freestylebikes.co.uk

HUSQVARNA TE300



THE HUSKY TE300 & KTM 200EXC STORY

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(open cartridge) and one for the Husky (4CS). When it comes to off-road suspension tuning I couldn't look past Alan and his team at Stillwell Performance. Not just because they work with Cody Webb and have been invited to be part of the Beta factory racing team's efforts in the US, but because they are meticulous in their attention to detail when it comes to designing the suspension setup for every one of



My prep for the Welsh started back in February when we identified that the Welsh would be the goal for our first long term test. Between then and the beginning of June, when I began work on the bikes, it was all about getting hooked up with the upgrades and parts I needed.

1: SUSPENSION UPGRADES

Costs: Stillwell A-Kit upgrade

(forks only): US\$1495 per set

www.stillwellperformance.com

WP Trax PDS shock for

the KTM: £1500

WP Trax linkage shock for the

Husky: £1000

www.fatcatwpsuspensionuk.com

Fastway Linkage Guard: £275

www.promotobillet.com

It's no secret that both Husky and KTM need serious work on their stock suspension, so this was my first priority.

Given that at this stage I'd not chosen which bike to ride in the Welsh I called our mate Alan Stillwell at Stillwell Performance (in the US) to see if he could hook us up with two sets of front forks, one for the KTM



their customers individually. Oh, and by the way, they have more off-road wins/titles in the US than you can shake a stick at.

Their A-Kit upgrades include both forks and shock but again given the time constraints (*mine*) I chose to have Alan and his team only do the forks for me.

I was going to have to source my shocks in the UK so I called Martin and Mike at Fatcat WP suspension who are the official agents for WP to see if they could sort a WP Trax shock for each of the bikes. I ordered a new PDS Trax shock for the KTM and since they had no new stock of the linkage shock for the TE300 Martin kindly offered me a demo version onto which he fitted the correct spring for me.

The suspension was by far my most extravagant spend.

The Stillwell Performance A-Kit upgrade typically includes both the front and rear suspension and is priced at \$2895.00.

KTM 200EXC



FORKS

SP Kashima Coated Upper Fork Tubes -SP DLC Coated Lower Fork Tubes -SP Fork Revalving -SP Midvalve Mods -SP Fork Pro Valve Pistons -SP Polished Fork Springs -SP Pro Sliders -Billet Clickers -Air Bleeders

SHOCK

SP Kashima Coated Shock Body -SP Pro Valve Shock Piston -SP Bladder Kit -SP Preload Collars -SP Shock Revalving -SP Shock Spring.

Given that I only had the forks done the cost from Stillwell came in at \$1495.00 per set. I would normally strip, package and ship the forks to Stillwell (*Arizona, USA*) and have them do the mods but given the time constraints I asked Alan to source two new sets of forks in the US for me and to install their A-Kit upgrades. This is

obviously more expensive than shipping your forks to them but I now get the added bonus of having a spare set of forks for each bike. I've quoted the prices for the A Kit upgrades only – shipping from the UK was around \$200 per set. Oh, and since Husky made only minor changes from 2015 to 2016 I asked Alan to source a set of 2016 forks for the 300 for me. This would mean that I needed a 22mm offset and front spindle to get the forks to fit.

To this set-up I added a Fastway linkage guard. This is a really trick bit of kit that was designed and built by Fastway in collaboration with Alan Stillwell. The linkage guard is fully adjustable and provides a good deal of versatility in setup of the rear suspension. There are four adjustments on the linkage that can both lower the seat height and adjust the geometry besides providing protection to the rear shock linkage in gnarly conditions. I chose to stick with the standard settings for now.



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2: WHEELS

Cost: HAAN wheels: £699.99/set
www.motocrossdirect.co.uk
Talon Wheel Combo's TBC
www.talon-eng.co.uk

These were one of the last items I ordered. The standard DID wheels on both the Husky and KTM are functional and hardy bits of kit for sure but for the Welsh and events of its ilk that we'll be riding in the future I wanted a combination of weight saving and durability. Also the idea of having a set of spare wheels for each bike fitted with optioned tyres and mousses that would make changing them out for different conditions or future tyre tests a cinch.

My choices on wheels were to order a complete set of Talon wheels for the Husky and KTM. I put in a call to Simon from Talon Engineering to see if he could hook

us up with the Talon wheel combo's I wanted (*A60 rims which are like hens teeth, together with Talon's new carbon hubs*). Unfortunately Simon couldn't supply the combo I wanted in time for the Welsh as they were making up the flanges for the carbon hubs at the time.

I had also put in a call to Roland at Motocross Direct who is the importer of HAAN Wheels in the UK. He managed to get me the wheel combo for the Husky I wanted (*Black rims, blue hub, black spokes and blue nipples*) made up and shipped from the Netherlands within a week, which was absolutely awesome service. They arrived on the day we were leaving for the Welsh and thanks to Joe at Freestyle and a Rabaconda mousse changer they made it onto the bike quick smart without me even having to get my hands dirty.

3: TYRES

Costs: GoldenTyre GT 216 AA

90/90-21 front tyre: £49.99

GT 80/90-21 mousse: £99.99

Motion Pro Liteloc rim locks:

£15.95 each.

www.adventurespec.com

GT 232 N 140/90-18 rear tyre:

£62.00

GT 120/90-18 mousse: £99.99

www.dirtbikespec.com

I'm a big fan of GoldenTyre off-road tyres and while I'd only had one previous occasion to ride on them, I was sold. They just hooked up like nothing else I'd ridden on before. Given that my previous experience was in the dry and on semi

hard-pack I wanted to give them a go in the wet muddy conditions that Wales is renowned for.

It seems that the prowess of the GoldenTyre is no secret and getting my hands on them was no easy task. I put in a call to Dave at Adventure Spec who was able to supply me a good set of front tyre/mousse options for various weather and terrain conditions. Dave was both informative and forthcoming on the tyre/mousse combo's he thought would work well for the Welsh and based on his advice I chose to run a 90/90-21 GT216 AA with an 80/90-21 GoldenTyre mousse upfront. I also ran Motion Pro Liteloc rim locks to ensure that the tyres (*both back and front*) stayed in place.

Paul and Lisa Bolton are also GoldenTyre suppliers in the UK and run their business,



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4: BRAKES

Cost: Husky: Motomaster 270mm flame rotor: £61.99 and adapter: £49.99

www.24mx.co.uk

Husky: Stock rear brake: £0

KTM: Braking 270mm rotor

and kit: £159.90

KTM: Braking 230mm rear

brake rotor: £64.99

www.talon-eng.co.uk

Stopping power is critical and although both KTM and Husqvarna have excellent hydraulic brakes, I wanted to bolster them by fitting oversize rotors on both of the bikes.

I chose to test the Motomaster 270mm flame rotor for the Husky and the Braking 270mm rotors for the KTM so we could compare their performance over long-term tests. The Motomaster discs came via 24MX and Talon Engineering supplied the Braking products.



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**WELSH
TWO DAZE**
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Dirt Bike Spec to support Paul's racing efforts. I wanted the GT 230N's but, like Dave at Adventure Spec, Lisa said she was also waiting for supply from the factory so no luck. Lisa did however have some alternatives in stock and could help me out with some GT 232N's as well as some of the 216X Gummy rears. I ordered a few rear wheel combos given the unpredictability of the Welsh weather but in end I settled on running a 140/90-18 GT 232N with a GT 120/90-18 mousse.

In case I didn't mention it before – tubes are a no-no in my book unless you're racing on a closed circuit course. A flat is just not worth the potential impact on your racing results or worse a DNF.



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KTM 200EXC





In association
with Freestyle Bikes



WELSH 
TWO DAZE
.....
THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

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5: ERGONOMICS (Seats, Footpegs and Controls)

Ergos are essential to get right and behind suspension the most important (*and often overlooked*) setup priority in my opinion. To get your ergos right you need to focus on three elements:

SEAT: Cost: Husky Power Parts High Seat (+20mm): £112.99

Firstly, seat height, which makes transitioning from seated to standing more effective and saves human energy.

At 183cm tall and 50 years old (*or nearly*) I wanted quality, durability and comfort as well as seat height options. The standard

seat heights on both the bikes are too low for a rider of my height. So I called Scott at Seat Concepts in the US. They supply seat covers for all types of bikes as well as building custom seats using their proprietary foam and of course they ship globally. In the end I settled for two custom (*high*) seats that are 20mm taller than the stock

seats together with grippy seat covers. Given that they are custom made by Seat Concepts they would not be ready for the Welsh. As a stopgap I ordered a tall seat from the Husky Power Parts catalogue (*no stock for the KTM 200*).

www.seatconcepts.com

www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com

HUSQVARNA TE300

FOOTPEGS

Cost: Raptor Enduro Footpegs:

£209.95

www.raptortitanium.com

The second of the three ergo elements. I wanted to be able to move the footpegs down and back which would complement the high seat and make the riding position on the bike a little more aggressive. I was also looking for a wider than standard platform that would clear out the mud, were light and durable and most importantly would position my foot in the correct place to work the back brake more functionally.

As far as the distance between the footpegs and back brake step plate on standard bikes go, they are just too short for taller riders. This is not an area where one size fits all. It doesn't. I called Jimmy at Raptor in the UK and he advised me to go for their Enduro pegs that offer the right adjustment options I was looking for. I chose a kit that would allow me to position the pegs 5mm back and 5mm down while the open design on the Enduro pegs would clean the mud out easily. Raptor is the choice of the majority of top pros when choosing their titanium foot pegs. They're pretty pricy but in my opinion are worth the spend and provide a good combination of durability, strength and weight saving. Once fitted I really liked the wide platform and improved comfort and grip on the boot.

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HANDLEBARS

Cost: Renthal Twinwall

Bars: £103.95

www.renthal.com

Pro Taper Evo Bars: £93.99

www.protaper.com

PHDS Clamps: £145.99

www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com

I chose to test two variants of handlebars, the Pro Taper Evo's on the KTM and a set of Twinwall Renthal 998's on the Husky. I also fitted a set of Progressive Handlebar Damping System clamps in place of the stock clamps. They add some height to the bars and offer a wider array of positioning options in addition to the reduced vibration and damping qualities. They were supplied from the Husky and KTM Power Parts catalogue through our local dealer, Mac's Motorcycles and offer a noticeable dampening affect but are a less dramatic and less expensive damping solution than a mounted steering stabilizer.

The Renthal Twinwalls are a more rigid bar but combined with the PHDS offer strength with just the right amount of flex for me. The control area on the 998's is a little short on account of the twinwall design and so it was a very tight squeeze getting the hand guards to fit alongside the controls and electric start mounts.

The Pro Taper Evo's offer a more flexible feel and a cleaner control area with more space to fit the Fastway Flak Shield hand guards.

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WARREN'S PERSONAL PREPARATION

Most of the training work was based on a hybrid training regime taken from Mike Stephens' Get Fit Ride Fast' e-book, my own programmes developed over the years based on Cross Fit techniques and paired with strength and flexibility programs designed by Bear Grylls.

For the most part I train on average four/five days a week combining cardio and strength training in-between cycling. I was happy with my prep (*lost almost ½ stone*) in the months leading up to the event and was able to maintain a good level of intensity in short and longer distances on the bike and routines.

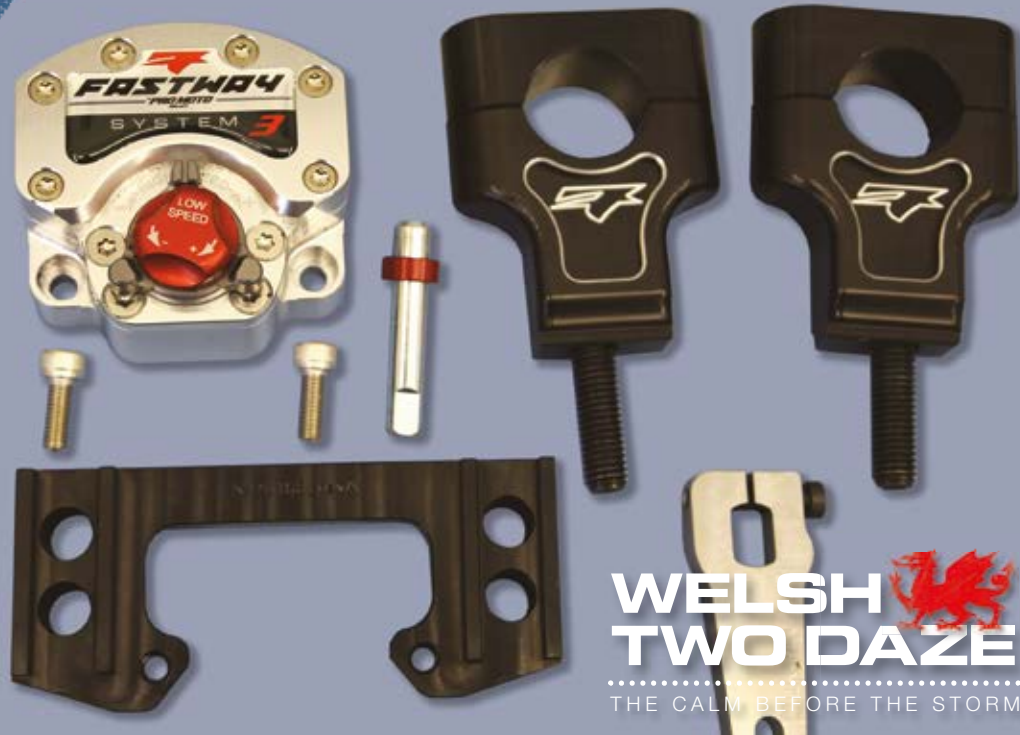
As I mentioned before, my bike time was very limited and there's nothing for fitness like time in the saddle. Nutrition was also something I was trying to focus on but with my work-travel schedule this wasn't always easy. Its important to get your nutrition right as an integral part of your training rather than trying to figure this out on race day.

Like JB I had all of about two and a half hours on the bikes before the event. I rode the KTM in Kent at ActionTrax (*and loved the bike*) and then had a stint on the Husky, again with ActionTrax near Sevenoaks. Based on JB's advice I finally chose the Husky 300 over the KTM 200 for the Welsh. Having not been to Wales before I was reliant on JB for insight on which bike would work best for the terrain.

www.getfitridefast.com
www.crossfit.com



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WELSH TWO DAZE
THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

6: STEERING STABILIZERS

Cost: Scotts Performance SUB mount kit: US\$582

www.scottsonline.com

Fastway Full Underbar Kit

System 3: US\$577

www.promotobillet.com

I chose the Scotts Performance steering stabilizer for the KTM 200. The lightness of the bike demands a steering stabilizer at high speed on this bike. Thanks to Jake from Scotts Performance in the USA who was able to source me the right kit for the KTM at really short notice. I specifically

ordered an under bar mount option and I have to say that out of the box this kit just looks top quality.

I've ridden with their products before (*but some time back*) and had nothing but good experiences. I look forward to testing the new kit on the 200 and given the visible quality on unpacking I have high expectations on the performance improvement/ handling on the bike.

For the 300 I chose to experiment with a product that I've had no experience with and is not well known (*at least I've never seen one*) in the UK. I chose the Fastway

System 3 steering stabilizer, also in the 'under bar' variation. I've had a bad experience with the over bar option some years back and almost took the front of my helmet off in a crash, so personally I always choose the tucked away option.

I called Aaron from Pro Moto Billet (*who own Fastway*) who hooked us up with the System 3 stabiliser but (*my mistake and a rookie error*) I neglected to tell him that I was running a set of Husky Factory triple clamps with a 22 degree offset which are deeper than the stock clamps and so when the stabilizer arrived it wouldn't fit. I'd have to sort this at a later date so for now the 300 goes without a stabilizer.

7: TRIPLE CLAMPS

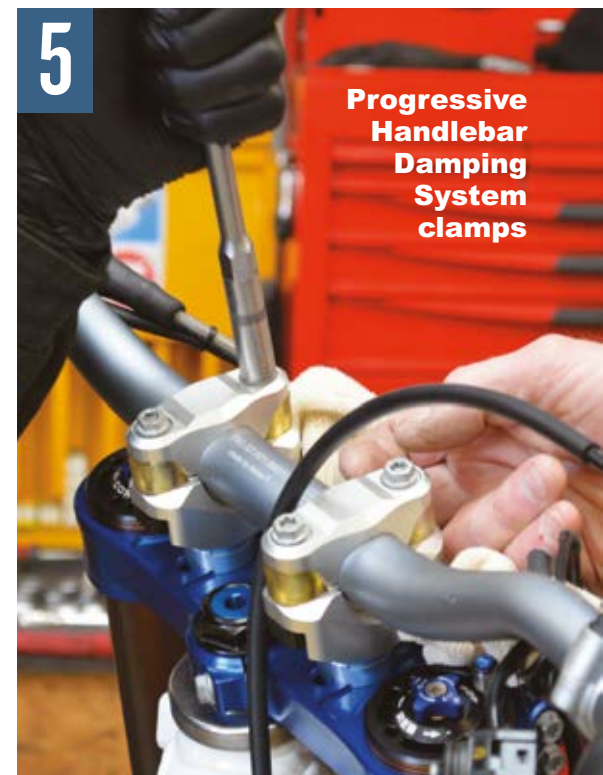
Cost: Husqvarna Factory Triple

Clamp: £416.99

www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com

In order to accommodate the Husqvarna 2016 front forks that replaced the stock 2015 set on the 300 I had to fit factory triple clamps

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Progressive Handlebar Damping System clamps

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(adjustable for 20-22mm offset) along with a new 22mm front wheel spindle. The factory triple clamps are CNC machined and tuned for optimal performance in every facet and provide increased rigidity to the front end. These were supplied (*and fitted*) at our local dealer, Mac's Motorcycles who I have to thank for helping us out with workshop space and assistance at short notice.

www.macs-motorcycles.com

I decided to leave the KTM with its stock clamps for the time being.

8: GRIPS & THROTTLE BODY

Cost: G2 Ergonomics Throttle

Cam System: US\$109.95

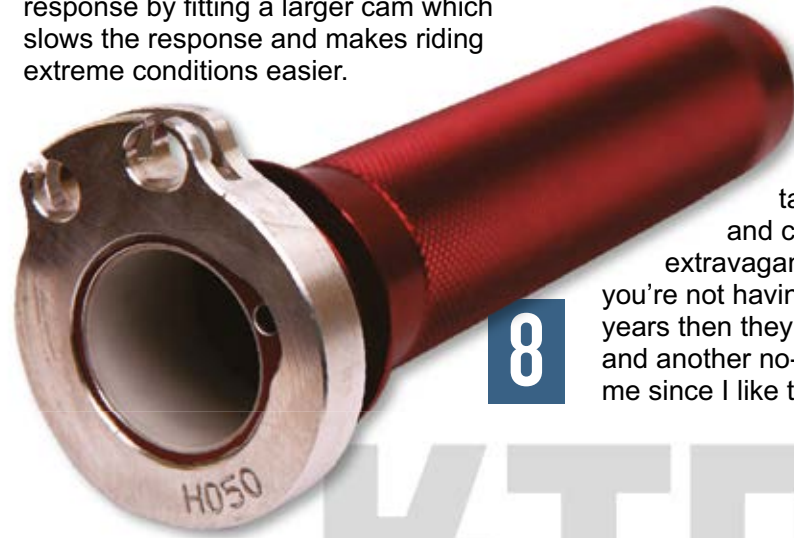
www.g2ergo.com

Pro Taper Pillow Top grips:

US\$12.95 UK£12.99

www.protaper.com

First thing to do was to bin the plastic throttle bodies on both bikes. This is a staple for any off-roader as a first step to happy dirt-biking/racing. Being stuck out in the middle of nowhere with a broken throttle body is just not worth the hassle for the low cost upgrade. I chose to fit aluminium throttle tubes from G2 Ergonomics. I love their products for a number of reasons. The tubes come with three options of throttle cams that are interchangeable without much fuss (*certainly less than re-gearing*) when faced with varying terrain. Most pro's use throttle cams to improve/ shorten throttle action time or to detune the throttle response by fitting a larger cam which slows the response and makes riding extreme conditions easier.



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Once the throttle tubes were done, I fitted both the Husky and KTM with Pro Taper's Pillow Top grips. The Husky stock grips are not bad but the stock grips on the KTM are just plain horrible and need replacing if you want to avoid blisters.

9: LEVERS

Cost: ARC Memlon Composite

Levers: £54,99/each

www.cghimports.com

There is only one brand of levers on the market for me – ARC. I chose the Memlon composite levers for both bikes (*and in fact for all my bikes*). These bad boys are indestructible, comfortable and have a very responsive and tactile feel on both the brake and clutch. They may seem an extravagant spend on levers but when you're not having to replace them for a few years then they seem really good value and another no-compromise necessity for me since I like to drop my bike reasonably



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often (*if you're not, then you're just not trying hard enough*). A big thanks to Nick from CGH Imports, the UK importers for supplying two sets of levers for both the Husky and KTM.



KTM 200EXC



10: SPROCKETS AND CHAINS

Cost: Dirt Tricks Zirconium Rear sprockets: US\$129/each

Dirt Tricks Chrome Rear sprockets: US\$109/each (KTM)

Dirt Tricks Front sprockets: US\$37/each

www.dirttricks.com

Regina OR chain: £50

www.reginachain.it

When selecting the components of the drive train for the bikes I wanted a combination of the following: performance, durability, strength, weight saving – and if possible some bling! I chose Dirt Tricks front and rear sprockets for both bikes.

Dirt Tricks sprockets are not alloy but heat-treated, chrome plated chromoly steel,

which they say is three-time stronger than aluminium, so they last a lot longer, (*in the US*) they even come with a one year wear guarantee – wear them out inside one year and they'll replace your sprocket free.

I chose their new Zirconium rear sprocket in a chromatic finish (*no two colours are the same*) for the Husky and opted for the slightly less expensive standard chrome rear sprocket for the KTM.

The Dirt Tricks front sprockets are built from ultra-hard tool steel. The majority of front sprockets on the market are “case hardened”, meaning that only a thin outer layer of steel is hardened below which is a layer of soft steel. The Dirt Tricks front sprockets are heat treated shock resistant tool steel which is the same steel used to punch holes through 1” thick plates of steel, on high speed punch presses. They claim that this material provides added strength, durability and wear resistance without being brittle.

For the Husky I kept the gearing ratios stock (13/50) and on the KTM I opted for a 13/50 which is one tooth bigger on the rear. Gearing the bike down slightly helps shorten the transition point from second to third and helps me stay in third more comfortably.

I chose to run Regina OR (*O-ring*) chains (*made in Italy*) on both bikes.

11: SWINGARM GUARD AND CHAIN GUIDES

Bullet Proof Designs Swingarm Guard: US\$75

www.bulletproofdesigns.com

TM Designworks Chain Guide: US\$72.95

www.tmdesignworks.com

This is once of those combinations that I've stolen from the pro's and wanted to test for myself. The chain guide-mounting bolt on both the KTM and Husqvarna is a weak spot and most, if not all, pros choose to run an aftermarket swingarm guard that improves the rigidity and mounting strength in supporting the paired chain guide. I chose



to install a Bullet Proof Designs swingarm guard. The instructions were simple to follow and took Joe (*at Freestyle*) about 20 minutes to install. You do need to drill a hole in the swingarm and tap a thread and that may not be possible for everyone if they are lacking in the tool department but the end result is worth the effort.

I then attached a TM Designworks chain guide in blue for the Husky (*Orange for the KTM*). These one-piece moulded suckers are probably the best in the business (*we can just keep counting the AMA and world championships riders using these have won*) and are sturdy as all hell. The RMS (*return memory system*) plastic is highly impact resistant and the chain movement through the guide is precise and true.

Long Termers

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Freestyle
www.freestylebikes.co.uk



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12: REAR BRAKE ROTOR GUARDS

Cost: Bulletproof Designs brake rotor guard: US\$119

www.bulletproofdesigns.com

I again chose to go with Bullet Proof Designs and their rear brake rotor guard. The guard improves the protection to the rear brake and saves weight over the stock guard. Out of the box the composite guard feels sturdy and quality evident.

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13: PROTECTION

Radiator Braces. Hand Guards and Skid Plate. Radiator cages

Cost: Husqvarna radiator cages: £104.99

KTM radiator cages: £104.70

www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com

www.ktm.com

www.bulletproofdesigns.com

Fastway Flak Shields: £45.98 /set

www.promotobillet.com

P3 Carbon Skid Plate: \$199.95

www.p3carbon.com

frame guard only rather than a fully encased option. I chose to run these as airflow was going to be vital to cooling the bike at slow speeds or once caked in mud. Bullet Proof Designs had sent me over a pair of their fully encased cages for both bikes that I'm looking forward to testing in Southern Europe later in the year. They are designed to offer a greater degree of radiator protection and designed for more open high-speed desert riding where a greater deal of wraparound protection is needed from possible high-speed crashes.

RADIATOR CAGES

I fitted the bikes with the radiator braces from the respective Power Parts catalogues. The power parts radiator cages are constructed as an open-design radiator

HAND GUARDS

I am not a fan of the stock KTM or Husqvarna hand guards. I had wrist surgery last year as a result of my right hand and wrist being punctured by a Husky

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KTM 200 EXC



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Fibre/Kevlar and Biaxial glass fibre construction that is then finished off with a high gloss epoxy for added strength. The result is a light-weight bolt-on product that will provide super strength impact protection. P3's smart bracket and easy to follow instructions made the install a cinch. The flowing design and seamless construction was a perfect fit on the 300.

stock hand guard as it rotated and bent in an innocuous off during testing. I'm also not a fan of wrap around hand guards so I've been on a the hunt for a product I like. The criteria was that they were more of a more fulsome design, rigid yet light and enough flex to not rotate on impact.

I chose to test the new Fastway Flak Shield on both bikes and on fitting I'm stoked at the combination of size, design and quality.

SKID PLATE

I chose to run P3 skid plate on the 300 for two main reasons; one; is that P3's moulded design provides both engine and frame protection, the second; is that all of P3's products are handmade in the USA. The majority of skid plates on the market are manufactured in China and while they may be lighter and cheaper, none of them offer the lightweight composite Carbon



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14: PIPES AND SILENCERS

Cost: Pro Circuit

Platinum 2: £249.99

Pro Circuit Ti-2 R304

Silencer: £279.99

www.cghimports.com

FMF Gnarly: US\$249.99

FMF Fatty: US\$249.99

FMF Core 2 silencer: US\$129.99

www.fmfracing.com

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WELSH TWO DAZE

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

I really like testing the performance impact that different pipes have on individual bikes power curve performance on the dyno. I also have an interest in gearing and pipe selection to get the best and most tractable power out of varying combinations.

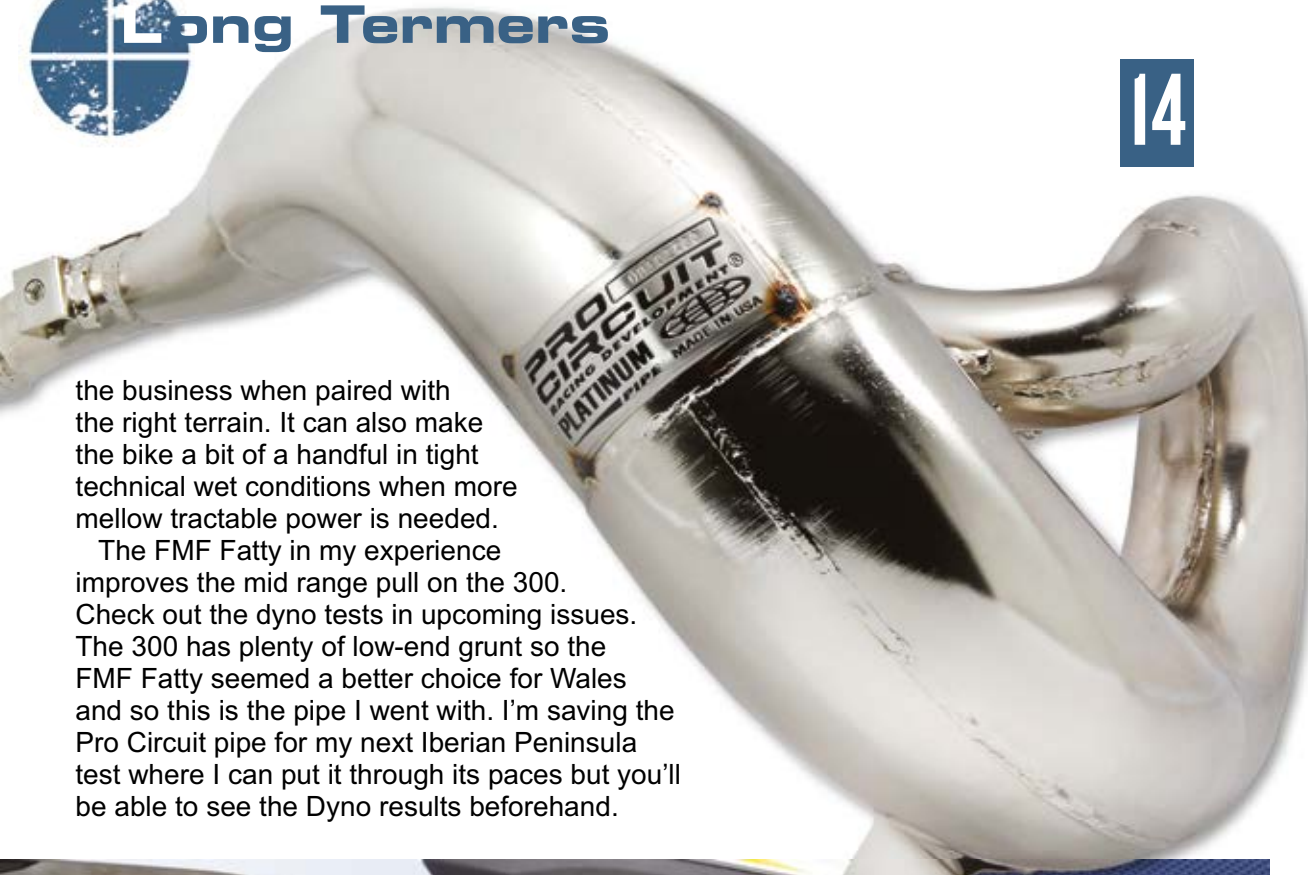
As my starting point I've chosen the FMF Gnarly for the KTM 200. The Gnarly improves low down grunt and on the 200 this is welcome when facing some of the more challenging ascents, thick sand and mud. I paired this together with an FMF Powercore 2 silencer.

For the Husky I chose two pipes to test as long termers. A Pro Circuit Platinum 2

pipe paired with either a Pro Circuit R304 Silencer stainless steel silencer or a FMF Powercore 2 silencer, and an FMF Fatty paired with a FMF Powercore 2 silencer or the R304.

I really like the Pro Circuit pipe for its overall horsepower improvement across the rev range. If you want to add overall grunt this is the pipe for you and suits fast open riding when low, mid and top end grunt is needed. This is not the pipe choice for novice riders but is aimed at faster riders looking to exact more from their rides. This pipe adds a noticeable power increase and is in my opinion the best in

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the business when paired with the right terrain. It can also make the bike a bit of a handful in tight technical wet conditions when more mellow tractable power is needed.

The FMF Fatty in my experience improves the mid range pull on the 300. Check out the dyno tests in upcoming issues. The 300 has plenty of low-end grunt so the FMF Fatty seemed a better choice for Wales and so this is the pipe I went with. I'm saving the Pro Circuit pipe for my next Iberian Peninsula test where I can put it through its paces but you'll be able to see the Dyno results beforehand.



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15: ENGINE PREP
(plugs, reeds, needles etc.)
Cost: Moto Tassinari V Force 4-Reed block: £149.99
www.motocrossdirect.com

I made no modifications to the engines except for those I felt would complement the pipe choice. In the end I chose the run a Moto Tassinari V Force 4 Reed block over the stock reed valves.

I also changed the stock plug for an Iridium BR8 plug that burns hotter than the stock unit. I then changed the stock needle in the 38mm Keihin carb for a Suzuki NECJ needle with the clip in the middle position (2nd from top). This smoothed out the over-rich stock jetting. Using this needle on KTM and Husky two-strokes in the past has in the majority of instances negated the need to faff about with the jetting. I also adjusted the float levels, which were horribly out of whack as PDI'd. The Husky was seriously thirsty which is normally a sign of incorrectly set floats levels.

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16: BATTERY
Cost JMT lithium ion battery: £41.99
www.husqvarna-motorcycles.com
www.ktm.com

I chose to fit a JMT lithium ion battery to the Husky and KTM – something Husky and KTM have done themselves for 2017 – to improve performance and provide more certainty to any possible issues that could affect the electric starter. Besides more electrical certainty this battery shaves almost 1kg of weight off the bikes.



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17: GRAPHICS AND PIT GEAR

Cost: LR Designs custom graphics: £160

www.lr-designs.co.uk

I have to thank Lee, Keith and Dave from LR Designs for the fantastic service during a very busy period. This was one area that neither JB nor I excelled at. We left getting our outline designs to them until the last minute and became the annoying punter wanting them to do the work yesterday. In the end they delivered a really cool design that really topped off the build and certainly turned a few heads besides pairing JB's and my bike into looking like a proper race team.

Next issue: Warren & JB go head-to-head in Wales. Whether its 300 miles or 300 kilometres (*we're not sure!*) it's two long days – who's going to win? (*No rushing off and sneaking a look at the results at www.welsh2dayenduro.com!*)

In association with Freestyle Bikes



Freestyle
www.freestylebikes.co.uk

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WELSH TWO DAZE

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM

RUST's W2D made possible with the support of...





Tested

ALPINESTARS SX-1 KNEE GUARDS

Supplied by
www.alpinestars.com

I DIDN'T ASK for these. I was looking for the most basic knee guards Alpinestars make. But over at A-Stars HQ they've grown wise to my cheapskate ways, so instead they ignored my request and upgraded me to a higher level of protection. And now that I've used the SX-1s I'm thankful they did.

I've used knee braces in the past. Only not having a significant knee injury I've not actually needed them – and I've not got on with them either. I get a bit niggled by the way braces restrict your knee movement. Being ex-trials I like moving about the bike in every direction, so the way braces hold your knees and, by design, restrict your movement in the one plane – that just



Tested

doesn't work for me. So I've stuck with plain kneepads and in fact have used the one pair of Acerbis pads for the last 13 years! (*Acerbis' Profile 2 guards would be a modern equivalent*).

So with the SX-1s looking very much like braces I wasn't exactly over the moon when I broke them out the packaging. But once I tried them on I was impressed with the initial comfort and secure fit – so figured I'd best give them a go.

The SX-1s might look like braces but actually they're pretty un-fancy, in fact quite a simple, honest product. I like the way the 'high performance polymeric material' protection extends up the thigh (*offering additional protection*), that the kneecap protector sits naturally in the right spot and that there's no chink in the armour when you bend your knees. And they're fairly low-profile, so they fit in the boot comfortably and so far haven't caused any wear and tear on the seat or panels of any of the bikes I've been testing. The dual pivot works well, smoothly, and unlike braces I've worn you do seem to be able to rotate your knees in more than just the one plane, allowing standard levels of flexibility. They have also remained comfortable over extended wear-times, including both days of the Welsh Two Day Enduro (*that's two eight hour days*). You do

ALPINESTARS SX-1 KNEE GUARDS



need to snug up the two elastic and Velcro adjusters, though – if they're not tight enough the SX-1s will slip down your leg.

Impact protection feels good too. I've taken a few dives just of late and haven't sustained any injuries in the knee-thigh area. That could be luck, but actually these were on hard pack and rock and there were moments of bang and crash, so there's a fair chance the SX-1s have been doing their job. The quality seems good too; so far there's been no sign of anything coming loose.

In the UK the SX-1s retail for £89.99 and that's about twice the price of a quality set of knee guards. Do they offer twice the protection? That's hard to say, but I'm willing to suggest they do offer additional protection and if I was more of a hard charging rider, willing to take the odd fall in the search for more speed, then I think that extra protection would be worth having. As it is, the SX-1s have become the new go-to knee protectors for me. Check back in, in 13 years time, and we'll see how they're going... www.alpinestars.com

Jon Bentman



SWM RS650R

SWM

600cc. Single cylinder. Trailbike.
It is that simple...

Words & images: JB

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I'M LOVING THIS SWM RS650R. I wasn't expecting that. Hopping off SWM's two dedicated enduros onto their middleweight trail bike was not a good way to make an introduction. Going from light-and-lively to heavy-and-gentle is never a good route. The big bikes typically end up feeling cumbersome and slow given such a comparison. But the RS650R doesn't. Yes, it's heavier and lower, and with the reduced grip of the Conti TKC80 adventure tyres (*as compared to Michelin enduro tyres on the RS300R/500R enduros*) we are struggling for grip on these Welsh trails, but heck the big SWM simply feels smooth and sophisticated. And capable. This is what 600-650cc single cylinder trail bikes should be all about...

FLASHBACK

In my youth – decades ago now – bikes like the Honda XL600M and Yamaha XT600 Ténéré made a huge impression. They were tall, flashy to the point of being bolshie, and in looking near-enough carbon copies of the Dakar racers of the day they were about as exciting as any trail bike could possibly dream of being. Road race replicas were the bike of popular choice (*in the UK*), but for an alternative macho statement these were the call.



They also became the call for ‘*explorer riders*’. I call them explorer riders as back in the mid 1980s no one spoke of adventure biking. Post Jupiter’s Travels, long distance travel into the Far East or Wild West was starting to become more prevalent (*not yet popularised*), and bikes like the XLs and XTs were mana to those brave riders keen to blaze new trails. The 600cc singles were particularly popular as they combined mechanical simplicity with a fair serving of reliability, durability and comparatively excellent off-road handling (*comparative to a Triumph Tiger T100 à la Ted Simon that is*) – plus just enough comfort.

Now while today the ‘*bigger is better*’ ethos has largely consumed the adventure motorcycle market there are still many who either remember those simple old days, or who need something a bit smaller, a bit lighter – usually on account of size, age, even gender. Those 1200cc super-adventures are awesome fun, but a 600cc single really can supply most of what’s needed in adventure riding. And so while the 1200s are always making the headlines, the middleweights still have a place (*you might pause to wonder what might have been had Ewan & Charlie selected BMW 650 Dakars for the Long Way Round...*).

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THE NOW

So this SWM RS650R joins onto the 'now' end of a decades-long tradition of single-cylinder trail bike /adventurers. In the now it sits alongside competitors such as the KTM 690 Enduro R, BMW Sertão and the Yamaha Ténéré – although the latter has apparently reached the end of the (*production*) line, and looks set to be quietly disappearing from Yamaha's showrooms, probably to make way for a 700cc twin-cylinder successor. That's the situation in Europe, elsewhere the SWM will nudge up against bikes like Kawasaki's KLR650 and Suzuki's DR650. All of which offer stiff opposition, whether on performance (*the KTM*), utility (*the Yamaha*) or on keen pricing (*the rest*).

Where the SWM sits is neatly in the middle-to-top on tech and near the bottom on price. The tech is mid-placed because unlike the Japanese and German offerings, this isn't a 1990s based engine. This is a svelte water-cooled DOHC competition-derived unit as developed by Husqvarna (*before the sale to Pierer/KTM*). It's lineage threads back to the Husqvarna TE570 enduro racer of the early 2000s, albeit with considerable updates over the years, so its closest relative (*virtual twin*) is the TE630 trail bike of 2010. It is essentially that bike remade with just a few changes.

And while we might scoff at six-year-old tech, we shouldn't, this unit is as up to date



as singles have come to be. It's no powerhouse the way the 67hp KTM 690 is, but at 54-56hp it's way ahead of the Japanese, and the fuel-injection is creamy-smooth – something of an improvement on where the TE630 finished (*in itself, evidence of continued development by the SWM R&D guys in Varese*). As well, that chassis is competition-derived, and so while it has shorter legs (*210/270mm travel*) and bigger seat and tank, it has the integrity, still, of a pure-bred racer. That takes it a fair technological cut above all but the KTM.

SMOOTH

Riding the RS650R over some trails in Wales, the tech and the market position all come into utterly rational focus. The bike sits only so-high. It says 900mm on the specs, but it seems lower, and with a narrow seat and tank combination it's easier to reach the floor than the numbers imply. Shorter riders really should check this out, it's not a sky-scraper. And while the suspension stroke is shorter (*I call it 9" suspension, proper enduro spec being 12-13"*) the Marzocchi forks and Sachs shock do a great job of offering nicely damped, plush movement. Sure if you rode it like a racer you'd find limitations, but it's not a race bike, so that



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observation is irrelevant.

That suspension combined with the race-proven frame make for assured handling off-road. There's nothing wallowy or under-damped here, the RS650R has an air of tenacity, you can point it and pin it with a degree of certainty on outcome. The enduro-spec wheel choice helps here, with narrow 21"/18" wheels on non-standard TKC80s – standard are GoldenTyre GT201s – there's decent enough grip. There's no clanking from bottomed-out suspension, there's no issue with your feet slipping off road-spec footpegs, this is a real dirt bike, right down to the seat which is long and fairly flat so you can move around freely. And the handlebars are properly shaped and positioned for comfortable stand-up riding. It has, indeed, a very strong off-road bias in its design. If I were to call it on the blend road/trail I'd say 30/70.

The power is, as said, silky smooth. That old TE630 of 2010 had a few low-rev fuelling glitches, but the SWM team must have put in some hours with the Mikuni fuel injection for it pulled sweetly on the RS650R all the way through. As before, with the TE630, the midrange is the main course, where the SWM feels the liveliest. And that's exactly where it should be. Gear changes and clutch action (*hydraulic for the latter*) are positive and sweet – one small drawback though – the short gear lever. With size 12 enduro boots I was struggling to sneak my toes



HUSQVARNA TE630

As you can see, the family lineage of the SWMs is clear. The twin pipes and black heat shields on the new bikes make the exhaust system much less obtrusive...



underneath it. Two options: replace it, or rotate it up a notch on the spline – in either situation, its 'small beer'.

What I particularly like is that the SWM feels so smooth, so well put together. In their last years with BMW, Husky dropped this engine and swapped over to the Rotax 650cc motor (*as found in the Dakar/Sertão*) for the Terra model and yet this engine was perfectly serviceable, and in so many ways the superior. In the RS650R it feels reborn, allowing the bike a vital modern gait that some of the lower-powered 650s are lacking. And that smoothness feels to flow through in all areas – the controls are all neat and slick in operation, everything is where it should



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be. Now the radiator shrouds may make the front end of the 'tank' wide but in the mid-section, where you sit and stand, it's nicely narrowed, proper ergonomics. It really is hitting the sweet spot.

By the way, it's a 600. Not a 650. I suspect SWM – much as Husky before them – figured the market wouldn't respond to a 600 (*what with everything else being 650s, 660s, 690s*), but ignore that capacity deficit, this bike has ample performance.

LIGHT IS RIGHT

The SWM also hits the mark for weight, or lack of. At 144kg (*claimed dry weight – probably call it just under 160kg when fully fuelled*) it lives easily alongside the 140kg



KTM 690R while being vastly below the poundages of the likes of the Sertão (177kg dry) and Ténéré (claimed 215kg wet, about 192kg dry). Again for the lighter/shorter among us this is a good thing. Even for the bigger, this is still a good thing. This makes it easier to manhandle and makes for an

WHAT WE LIKE ABOUT THE SWM RS650R

TWIN PIPES:

Neat design, lovely exhaust note. The Italians have the visual/aural relationship about right!

GREAT ERGOS:

We love the simplified 'flightdeck'. A flattish seat, proper enduro bars and pegs, minimal instrumentation and headlamp.

QUALITY SUSPENSION:

Marzocchi and Sachs don't quite rule it in enduro anymore, but for trail/adventure this set-up feels quality, and with 9" of travel each end it's the right length kit for the job



SWEET MOTOR: The TE630 motor makes a welcome return, it's smooth yet plenty punchy. The fuel injection feels spot on too

NICELY LIFTED:

Loving the generous ground clearance – yet the seat height remains real-world

LIGHT WEIGHT: Too many 600s have grown too fat. The SWM sits on 145kg, which is spot-on for its size and capacity, making it easier for smaller people to manhandle

21-18: Proper enduro spec wheels give the SWM a great ride in the rough



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easier time for the suspension etc.

There are other items worthy of note. I like the fact it comes with a dirt-spec foam filter (*not a paper type*). Interviewing Ted Simon a couple of year back he commented that he'd have not even half of the technical issues he had with his Triumph T100 (*as recorded in Jupiter's Travels*) if the bike had only come with decent air filtration. For riding in sandy/dusty conditions, as found in adventure, a foam filter is the standard and will go a long way to abating premature engine wear.

I like too the twin exhausts (*the TE630 came with a single, rather large muffler*), which balance the aesthetic and allow a muted yet tuneful soundtrack to the ride. All round, considering the budget-level pricing, the quality is pleasingly high.

Now while the actual spec (*in terms of rider comforts*) is fairly bare bones, I like that as well. Better this than overdressed. I'd be quite happy to ride this bike with just panniers (*soft or hard*) for a long trip. The ground clearance is so good you'd not seriously need a bash plate, and the design is so slick it doesn't want for crash bars either. Maybe if fuel range was an issue I'd swap the standard 12-litre tanks for a 25-litre vessel (*Australian firm Safari made them for the TE630 and apparently they'll drop straight onto the SWM as well*). But if you want nothing less than a full-dress adventure



bike – with screen, crash bars, panniers, kitchen sink – then just hang on a month or two because SWM will have a kitted-650, the ‘Superdual’ along soon.

SPOT ON

Now this shortish test was dirt only, but with gravel trails of a long and straight type available we could hit 60-70mph and this really wasn't a problem, the gearing is long enough for this to be relaxed enough and there was no immediate hint of vibrations. It would be good to try some tarmac miles soon though.

In all, the SWM RS650R hugely impresses. Lighter and faster than a Sertão or a Ténéré. A good match for a 690R for dirt capability. Well made yet budget priced to match the old-tech KLR/DRs. But as importantly a bike made by guys who clearly know and love the job (*they must have been itching to get back into the game these last few years after the Pierer deal left them effectively beached*). It's a trail bike come adventure bike made by guys who do enduro – so it has dirt bike capability (*rather than adaptability*) running right through it. Yet it has a sense of smooth sophistication you associate with roadsters. In short an excellent blend, altogether, an excellent bike.

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SWM RS650R

SPECIFICATION

Engine: Liquid-cooled DOHC,
4-valve single cylinder four-stroke

Capacity: 600cc

Bore & stroke: 100x76.4mm

Compression ratio: 12.4:1

Fuelling: Mikuni fuel injection,
45mm throttle body

Ignition: 12v, electronic

Starting: Electric

Transmission: Six-speed

Clutch: Wet multiplate

Frame: Tubular steel single tube
backbone, double cradle

Front: Suspension Marzocchi,
45mm USD, 210mm travel

Rear: Suspension Sachs monoshock,
270mm travel

Front brake: 256mm disc,
twin-piston caliper

Rear brake: 216mm disc

Tyres: 90/90-21, 140/80-18

Weight: 144kg

Seat height: 900mm

Wheelbase: 1505mm

Fuel capacity: 12 litres

Top speed: NA

Price: €6990 / £5699

Contact: www.swmmotorcycles.co.uk
www.swm-motorcycles.it



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BLOGGING, SOCIAL MEDIA & ADVENTURE MOTORCYCLING

BY JULY BEHL,
PHOTOS: TOURATECH & JASON SPAFFORD

BLOGS, BLOGS EVERYWHERE and not an article to read..... nah, not really! Over the last few years there's been an increasing number of adventure motorcycling blogs that cover a myriad of topics from gear, travel, tools, tyres, routes and accommodation to, well, just about anything and everything there is under the sun on the subject. And not just independent websites, these blogs are all over social media be it Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

I personally think it's great that we're leveraging social media to promote our niche – Adventure Motorcycling. The world needs to know about the crazy things we get up to and what better platform to do it than an awe-inspiring blog. Of course there's also vlogs (*video blogs, if you're new to this*), short films and documentaries, but let's admit it these are beyond the reach of most and require a whole host of camera and editing skills we weren't taught at school – unlike writing prose.

To put things in perspective, it takes a lot of time, money, energy, creativity and effort in developing a blog from a concept. It's a minefield – there's website builders, web themes, layouts, content, photography, logo design, social media integration and on and on... the list is endless. And even after the blog is live, it takes a lot to maintain it and ensure it reflects one's travel ethos – and that of sponsors, for those of us who are lucky enough to be sponsored.

No doubt, these blogs can be a bit self indulgent and at times monotonous and mundane, but these are bikers (*just like us*) who despite riding hundreds of miles, with poor facilities and weak internet connections make the effort to share, and more importantly, inspire us to explore the world on two wheels. They are informative and in most cases an invaluable resource on the current state of affairs – be it road conditions, weather or the political situation.



Unlike the news, they actually paint a true picture of the places we want to ride and explore.

Of course, there's a flipside to this blogging malarkey – it's the ravenous appetite for 'likes' and 'followers'. In some cases, it's all about the stats – the data – they want more. Why? It's simple really, the more the followers, hits, visits one has on the blog, the more are the chances of sponsorship, deals and partnerships. It's an easier sell to companies wanting to market their product and services. And on the whole there's nothing wrong with it... till it becomes unethical and for a whole host of reasons bloggers succumb to 'buying' followers and likes! Fortunately, it's only a minority who go down this route. God save adventure motorcycling (*and of course, the Queen*)

From photograph updates on Instagram, to micro-blogging on Twitter, to status updates on Facebook pages and full blown articles, they keep us updated, entertained and intrigued – they keep us happy and act as a constant reminder of the roads and trails still to be conquered. After all, the point of perusing all the many blogs and vlogs is to get inspired, get on a bike, and ride.

Some of the blogs on our radar

www.twowheelednomad.com

www.2ridetheworld.com

www.modernmotorcyclediaries.com

the big moto adventure (on Facebook & Instagram)

www.real-adv.com



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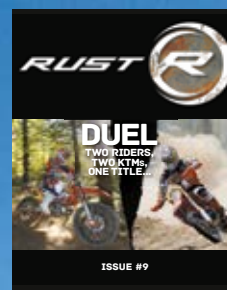
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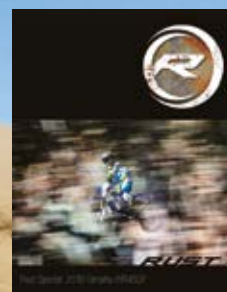
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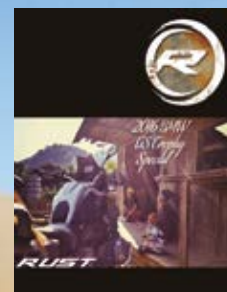
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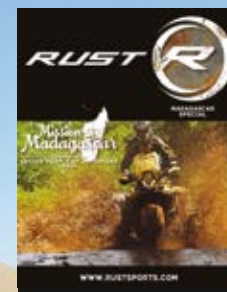
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2017 HUSQVARNA Range Launch

The 2017 Husqvarna enduro bikes, ridden and rated by RUST's Jon Bentman... Check out the 2017 Husqvarna Special Edition at rustsports.com.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=RwK49cZ4yvs

2017 BETA Range Launch

The 2017 Beta enduro bikes, ridden and rated by RUST's Jon Bentman... Check out the full review in the 2017 Beta Special Edition at rustsports.com.



www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjZEeDKEYY

Beta works rider Steve Holcombe

FIM EnduroGP World Championship contender Steve Holcombe talks to RUST editor Jon Bentman about going pro and the challenges ahead...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=1gL9oTh6LN0

2017 BETA Range Launch

Stephano Fantigini tells us about the continuing development of the Beta range and the secret of their recent success...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0K02x9reL0

2017 KTM Range Launch

Warren Malschinger and Josh Snowden go to Portugal to ride the extensively redesigned 2017 KTM enduro range...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=54lfOS3nMtE

STILLWELL PERFORMANCE

Alan from Stillwell Performance explains their A-Kit tuned forks for RUST Magazine's long term Husqvarna TE300 and KTM 200EXC test bikes...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=mVYqp3biTnc

2016 BMW GS TROPHY THAILAND

Montage of scenes from the South-East Asia GS Trophy featuring comments from Kurt Yaeger, Tom Wolf and our man Jon Bentman...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=6XEkJabHLI4

2016 BMW GS TROPHY THAILAND

Kurt Yaeger describing the journalists attempts to ride up a massive mud slide on the journalist only first day acclimatisation ride out...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=QrOoVPEKIE

JONNY WALKER INTERVIEW

JB asks the extreme enduro specialist some pertinent questions about his rivals Graham Jarvis, David Knight and in-race hydration...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=gvyUxbymuMU

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Patsy Quick and Clive 'Zippy' Town talk about rally navigation and latest Dakar weapon the 2016 KTM 450RR Rally bike...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQBn2qbfopY

THE TRAIL RIDERS FELLOWSHIP

Read the story behind the ethos of the Trail Riders Fellowship in RUST Magazine Issue 5 available FREE on the website www.rustsports.com



www.youtube.com/watch?v=HX4-14sIoHE

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Warren, JB and Si give us their views on the latest Husqvarnas direct from the Wealdon Off-Road centre down in deepest Devon...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=L8ePyI2E4M

2016 V-STROM 650XT

Seve Hackett explains the revisions to the Suzuki 650 V-Strom in order to make it more suitable for all-out adventure riding...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=yriJw_FU910

2016 YAMAHA WR450F

JB tests the new Yamaha WR450F in the hills of Andalusia and finds that it's packing some heat and demands a good deal of respect...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=8I54XQYOoPo

2016 HUSQVARNA 701

Testing the new Husky 701 Enduro and the 701 Supermoto on the road and on the track...



www.youtube.com/watch?v=9oHMTpB0RNw

2016 HONDA AFRICA TWIN

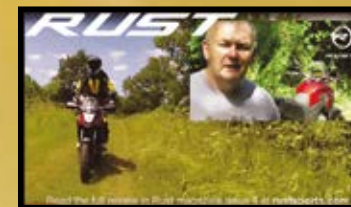
Exclusive first test of the new Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin... Read the story in the RUST Magazine Special Edition at www.rustsports.com



www.youtube.com/watch?v=mLPiT6Z-ACQ

2016 HONDA AFRICA TWIN

Jon Bentman discusses the finer points of the new Honda CRF1000L Africa Twin with Tom Myers of Touratech USA



www.youtube.com/watch?v=ntK07I63tuA

HONDA CB500X ADVENTURE

Jon gets an exclusive ride on the Rally Raid Products latest adaptation of the CB500X for the adventure riders out there...



Contact

Photo credit: Michael Martin – who this August celebrated 25 years of worldwide adventure projects with BMW GS motorcycles. Look out for his Desert Planet project that goes public in October.

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